



McMaster Divinity
College

Biblical Foundations 1

OT 1A03

Tuesday 10:30 a.m. – 12:20 p.m.

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Course Description

Biblical Foundations is an orientation to the Bible to provide an interpretive framework that is theologically grounded, spiritually enriching, critically aware, and practically relevant. Attention will be paid to the contents of individual biblical books, the process of their composition and development, and the historical contexts from which they emerged. The historical contexts are the ancient Near East, Second Temple Judaism, and the Greco-Roman world. Attention will be given to the relationship between the Testaments, unity and diversity with the biblical canon, important literary motifs, and theological themes. Orientation will be given to help the student learn principles for reading the Bible and applying its truth in contemporary time.

Course Objectives

Knowing

- Students will gain an introductory knowledge of Old and New Testaments.
- Students will become familiar with presuppositions, method, and conclusions of modern scholarship in analysing the Bible.
- Students will integrate the content of Scripture.
- Students will understand the historical contexts of all biblical books.
- Students will understand the Bible in each of its components, and how these developed to become the canon used and accepted by the Church.

Being

- Students will experience the Bible as Scripture, an authority for faith and life in the Christian community.
- Students should experience personal growth in maturity and understanding as they engage Scripture.
- Students will embrace Scripture as essential to the function of the church.
- Students will understand the relevance of Scripture to question and conflicts within society.
- Students will come to experience more fully the presence of God in their lives.

Doing

- Students will correlate geography and topography with biblical narratives.



- Students will contextualize biblical narratives in their historical situation.
- Students will become familiar with biblical literature and theology.
- Students will develop skills in research of ancient texts.
- Students will engage biblical theological motifs to develop their own world view.

Textbooks

Michael Gorman, ed., *An Ecumenical Introduction to the Bible and Its Interpretation*, Hendrickson / Baker, 2005. Pages listed are from the Hendrickson edition.

Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament*, 3rd ed., Fortress Press, 2010.

Iain Proven, et al., *A Biblical History of Israel*. Westminster John Knox, 2003.

Textbook Purchase

All required textbooks for this class are available from the College's book service, READ On Bookstore, Room 145, McMaster Divinity College. Texts may be purchased on the first day of class. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstore, 304 The East Mall, Suite 100, Etobicoke, ON M9C 5K1: phone 416.620.2934; fax 416.622.2308; email books@readon.ca. Other book services may also carry the texts.

Required Readings

Bible with Apocrypha

The Bible with apocrypha will be read in the course of the year. This may be in the language of the student's choice. Old Testament, Apocrypha, and New Testament may be read in different translations. Preferred Old Testament options include:

A New English Translation of the Septuagint (NETS)

Tanakh: The New JPS Translation (Jewish Publication Society)

Biblical Text

Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 3rd ed., Fortress, 2012.
Pages 23-46; 155-190

Biblical Canon

Shemaryahu Talmon, "The Crystallization of the 'Canon of Hebrew Scriptures' in the light of Biblical Scrolls from Qumran," pages 419-442 in *Text and Canon of the Hebrew Bible*, Eisenbrauns, 2010.

Course Schedule

Classes begin Tuesday **September 15**.

Reading Week Tuesday **October 13**.



Final Exam is Tuesday **December 15**.

Course Evaluation

1. Research Paper on the History of Israel [30%]

Fifteen pages, double-spaced, 12 point Roman font
Footnotes single-spaced and 10 point Roman font.
See Paper Evaluation section below

Identify a scholarly issue related to the history of Israel. Topics include, but are not limited to:

Dating the Exodus

Archaeological evidence for the destruction of Jericho

The kingdom of David (as history or myth)

The Exile: e.g. evidence for the fall of Jerusalem; extent of the exile; the myth of the empty land

The Restoration: e.g. the chronology of Ezra and Nehemiah; the province of Yehud in the early Persian period

The paper will describe your approach to ancient historiography and present the primary scholarly views on the debated issue. The paper must draw conclusions through interacting with the available evidence. The paper must contain a bibliography consisting of *at least 12 items* of varied secondary sources (commentaries, theological dictionaries, specialized books and *at least 2 articles from refereed journals*). By way of **supplement** to these 12 sources, a student may use a **maximum of 2** internet resources. Students are responsible for the quality of these internet resources. These secondary sources do not include primary sources (the Bible, Josephus, Qumran). Each source listed must be drawn on in the paper and evidenced in the footnotes etc. Your paper must include a statement on the title page stating the percentage of Provan-Long-Longman (2003) read *prior* to the completion of the paper.

- ALL TOPICS MUST BE APPROVED BY YOUR PROFESSOR

2. Jesus in Context with Project [30%]

- Research paper 6 pages, double-spaced, 12 point Roman font throughout entire paper
Footnotes must be single-spaced and 10 point Roman font
See McMaster Divinity College Style Guide
- Project—1 page, single-spaced detailed teaching plan, outline or project
- See 'Paper Evaluation' section below

Due midnight Nov 13. Email pdf file.

Students will write a paper on understanding Jesus Christ in the context of the history of the OT and Second Temple Judaism, interacting with the course texts, material covered in the classroom, and at least **5** other secondary resources. By way of **supplement** to these 5 sources, a student may use a **maximum of 2** Internet resources. Students are responsible for the quality



of these Internet resources. These secondary sources do not include primary sources (the Bible, Josephus, Qumran). Each source listed must be drawn on in the paper and evidenced in the footnotes etc.

The research paper should interact with how Jesus as a historic figure is understood in the historical context of both the History of Israel and Second Temple Judaism.

The project consists of a plan of a study or presentation of “Jesus in Context” that you can use in your ministry. This is your opportunity to apply your research in some aspect of ministry—whether counselling, youth, pastoral, cross-cultural, academic, etc.

3. Final Exam 30%

The purpose of the final examination is to help students integrate knowledge of the Bible, its historical context, and theological themes from course readings and lectures. The final exam will include essay and short answer questions in two major areas: Biblical textual history, composition, and canon; Biblical history and geography,

4. Bible Reading, Textbooks and Other Assigned Readings [10%]

Report on portions of Bible read and versions used. This must total at least half of the Bible. Report on all readings assigned on the syllabus and in class.

Grading Summary

- 1. History of Israel – 30%**
- 2. Jesus in Context – 30%**
- 3. Final Exam – 30%**
- 4. Reading – 10%**

Style

All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses

<http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/sites/default/files/documents/MDCStyleGuide.pdf>

Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

All papers to be submitted in electronic format only (a pdf file)—no hardcopies! The research paper on the History of Israel must be emailed to konkela@mcmaster.ca. The Jesus in Context paper must be emailed to westfal@mcmaster.ca

If you need a program for creating pdfs go to <http://primopdf.com> or <http://www.pdf995.com> for a free pdf maker. Include your last name in the file name of your attachment (e.g., [evans.researchpaper.pdf](#)). To avoid late marks papers must be received before the end of the calendar day on which they are due (i.e., before midnight Eastern Standard Time).



Policy concerning late papers

Extensions for papers will not be given except in very exceptional circumstances (serious illness, family crises, etc.). Busyness, computer problems, etc. are not legitimate reasons to grant extensions and in the interests of fairness any request for extensions will take into account the entire class. Late assignments will be docked at the rate of 2% per day for the first 7 days (including weekends) and 4% per day after that. All assignments must be received by the last day of class in order to avoid a failing grade in the class.

Inclusive language

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all of its publications. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected. The NRSV and NIV 2011 are examples of the use of inclusive language for human beings. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments

Attendance & Participation

- Students are expected to be on time to class or ready to give an explanation for their tardiness to the professor.
- Students are also expected to stay for the entire class session, unless arranged in advance with the professor.
- More than 2 absences may result in a reduction of the final grade, more than 4 absences may result in failure
- Students are not to carry on off-topic conversations in class.
- All student participation in way of comments or questions must be done without disrespect or ridicule
- Students may eat or drink in class if they do not distract others and they clean up their desks.

Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one's academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College. Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty ~

<http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>

Disclaimer

This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up to and including the first day of class.



OT 1A03 Class Schedule

In Class	Outside of Class		
Lectures	Secondary Reading	Assignment	Bible
Sept 15 Introduction to the Bible	Gorman 3-21		
Sept 22 Biblical Origins of Israel	Provan, Long, Longman 107-192 Gorman 23-44	Prepare and write: History of Israel Due date: Friday Oct 20	Read Old Testament during the Semester
Sept 29 Kingdoms of Israel	Provan, Long, Longman 193-277		
Oct 6 Exile and Restoration	Provan, Long, Longman 278-303		
Oct 20 Second Temple Judaism	Johnson 1-84		
Oct 27 Historical Jesus	Johnson 95-135 Articles in Dropbox	Prepare and write: Jesus in Context Due date: Friday Nov 13	
Nov 3 Spread of Early Church	Johnson 85-94, 209-225		
Nov 10 History Writing	Provan, Long, Longman 3-97		
Nov 17 Composition of Old Testament Books	Gorman 45-69		
Nov 24 Composition of New Testament Books	Gorman 71-90		
Dec 1 Canonical Books	Gorman 91-118 Talmon (Reading List)		
Dec 8 Textual Transmission	Gorman 119-130 Tov (Reading List)		
Dec. 15 Final Exam			



Paper Evaluation

Name: _____ Topic: _____

- I. The following items are rated according to this scale:
1 = inadequate; 2 = adequate; 3 = good; 4 = very good; 5 = superior.

Bibliographic consciousness	1	2	3	4	5
Range and Use of Sources	1	2	3	4	5
Clarity in Defining Issues	1	2	3	4	5
Strength of Argument	1	2	3	4	5
Awareness of Exegetical Issues	1	2	3	4	5
Accuracy of Data and Assertions	1	2	3	4	5
Analysis /Critical Thinking	1	2	3	4	5
Introduction (Thesis Statement /Clear Issue)	1	2	3	4	5
Development of Thesis (focus)	1	2	3	4	5
Literary Style (awkward, wordy, repetitive)	1	2	3	4	5
Organization/coherence of ideas	1	2	3	4	5
Grammar/Spelling	1	2	3	4	5
Neatness/Presentation	1	2	3	4	5

§ Note: this is a simple evaluation tool to assist in paper assessment. The categories are not weighted equally, and thus are not added together or averaged to calculate your grade.

II. The following need attention if so indicated

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use inclusive language | <input type="checkbox"/> The paper is too long/too short |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Write a unified essay | <input type="checkbox"/> Edit your paper more thoroughly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Line spacing, Font size, Margins, Page numbers etc. need attention | <input type="checkbox"/> The paper needs balance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cite primary resources correctly/consistently (e.g., Gen 1:26; Genesis 1; etc) | <input type="checkbox"/> Cite secondary resources correctly/consistently |

III. Comments